ABERYSTWYTH residents are living in fear because of spiralling violence and vandalism fuelled by pubs plying revellers with cheap vodka and serving drunks.

That’s the claim of town councillors who have called for more police patrolling the streets to curb late-night disorderly behaviour and crime – which they have described as close to anarchy.

And they have appealed to MP Mark Williams to campaign against 24-hour boozing in a bid to solve the town’s “drink problem”. The town’s only 24-hour bar, the Inn on the Pier, was singled out for renewed criticism, although an earlier call for the authority to lead a move to strip the premises of its round-the-clock licence was dropped in favour of a demand for talks with Don Leisure, owners and operators of the premises.

The rebuke came as Gordon Brown ordered a Home Office review of legislation allowing 24-hour drinking.

The Aberystwyth row resurfaced at a meeting of the town council, which last month was urged by Plaid Cymru councillor Mark Strong to ask MP Mark Williams to call for a change in the licensing law to end 24-hour drinking.

“People are living in fear,” Clr Strong told the council. “People say they never see the police. If we don’t do something Aberystwyth is going to get like Swansea or Wrexham.”

He said later: “I personally have been the victim of common assault by Patrick O’Brien, patrick@cambridg-news.co.uk because I went to the aid of an old man who was being threatened by a drunk.

“A man who clearly had had too much to drink had come out of Bar Essential and kicked a pavement sign into the road. An old person who challenged him was approached menacingly by the drunk and I intervened.

“I was pushed in the chest but, luckily for me, an off-duty policeman who was in the pub came out and told the man he was in danger of being arrested. I’m very grateful to that policeman.

“In other clashes with drunks, he said, the windscreen of his car had been punched during an incident in Pier Street, and there had been an attempt by drunks to enter his house in the Cynfrin area.

He added: “Aberystwyth has a drink problem, and that is only worsened by the fact that some outlets are serving quadruple vodka.

“Some can take quadruple vodka and some can’t. There had been an effort by drunks to enter his house in the Cynfrin area.

The drink problem in Aberystwyth is not helped by the fact that there is a lack of police manpower because of inadequate funding for the force.

“The result is that, on one particular Friday night recently, there were only three policemen on duty in Aberystwyth.”

Plaid councillor Alun Williams claimed: “Some pubs and bars are serving people beyond the point of drunkenness.”

Earlier this year, a county councillor predicted that late-night drinking “will destroy large areas of the community of Aberystwyth.”

Liberal Democrat Ceredig Davies told the chairman of Ceredigion council’s licensing panel, Alun Lloyd Jones: “A day does not go by when I am not stopped by a person complaining bitterly following a disturbed night’s sleep, vomit on their doorstep or vandalism to their property.”

“I do not exaggerate when I say that the cumulative effect is akin to anarchy; people are losing sleep, their homes are being vandalised, their cars are being walked over and they feel vulnerable and afraid in their own community.”

Clr Davies said he was concerned that the voice of residents would be lost.

Don Leisure general manager Lee Price said they would be happy to meet the town council to discuss the Inn on the Pier’s 24-hour licence to sell food and drinks. He added: “Licensed activity reporting takes place on a daily basis and shows that 47 per cent of people refused service are competently identified by staff as being drunk.

“The Inn on the Pier upholds strongly its duty to promote responsible drinking and comply with The Portman Group’s Code of Practice; consequently, spirit measures up to a double only are permitted for sale to the public.”